

A review of the domino theory history essay



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Domino Theory, a complex and interesting theory, is based on a simple rule of physics. That rule is inertia. Inertia is the tendency of matter to remain at rest or to continue in a fixed direction unless affected by some outside force. An example for Domino Theory would be making a line of dominoes and then pushing the first domino over, as each domino falls another will follow until, finally, every domino has fallen.

As the process continues the dominoes will gain momentum. This analogy shows what could happen to the political make-up of any specific geographical area if any of the dominant political thought patterns are spread. The dominant political thought pattern that originally led to this theory was Communism. That is, that if one country in a region practices one particular type of government it could influence neighboring countries to adopt this type of government. Also, even though the process behind Domino Theory has technically been occurring since the dawn of humankind, it wasn't classified by a specific title until 1954 by the then president Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower used this theory to explain what he thought to be an eminent spread of Communism throughout Southeast-Asia. He stated that you have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is it, with certainty, will fall over very quickly. He believed, as many others did at that time, that if one country in Southeast-Asia fell to Communism then the surrounding countries would fall one by one. He was deeply disturbed by the way that Communism took hold of Eastern Europe after WWII and by the way that Asia was taken over by Japan so easily. Through this fear he saw the potential for a repeat of history in Southeast-Asia during the late 50's to the 70's. A certain situation that the

Domino Theory could be applied to is the rise of power of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the 1980's. The Soviet Union during this period of time gained power by forcefully taking land, or entire countries, out from under other governments. This situation not only gave a backing for the Domino Theory, but also showed a socialist inclination towards world domination. The signs of this inclination can be found in many places including Nations and Men, an International Politics and Relations book, which says, " In the abundant communist writings of that period very little is found on the subject of future communist foreign policies beyond the hope that a unified communist commonwealth could emerge from inter-capitalist world wars" (Mazour 132). For that very reason Communism is a very important concept in understanding the Domino Theory.

There was also a revolution and that got the Tsar's out of power and Lenin in power just like Hitler in Germany. That was the beginning of Communism in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a communist threat to the rest of the world for the next 70 years. The event for which I previously stated that the Domino Theory was named for, Communism in Southeast Asia, took place in the 1950's-1970's. In both cases China was supporting the aggressor. The cases were North Korea attacking South Korea, and North Vietnam attacking South Vietnam. In both cases America intervened with military action. We were not the only country though that saw this action as very dangerous, Australia did too. In September of 1954, Minister of Defense, Sir Philip McBride, said, It is a matter of vital importance to maintain the gap between Australia and the present high-water mark of the southward flow of Communism. Should this gap narrow, the nature and scale of attack on

Australia would become intensified as distance shortened. Finally, should the tide of Communism lap on our shores, we would face an intolerable defense burden and a scale of attack which would be beyond our capacity to repel alone. There is, therefore, every reason strategically and economically why Australia should co-operate to keep aggressive Communism within its present boundaries, and to stem its onward flow. In April of the same year, Prime Minister of Australia, Robert Menzies, said, If communist forces again come on the march and a great war ensue, the farther north the lines of defense are drawn, the better for those communities of Viet Nam, and Laos, and Cambodia, and Thailand, and Burma, and Malaya, and the Philippines, and Indonesia and all the rest of us who wish to retain control of our own future and govern ourselves in our own way. Many people said and still say today that the conflict in Vietnam was an internal conflict or a civil war, and that the United States had no right to be there. I believe the United States had every reason and right in the world to be there. There are two major reasons for this, Communism and the Domino Theory. The North Vietnamese, or the Viet Cong (Vietnamese Communists), under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, were communist. They are supplied with artillery and ammunition through the Soviet-Chinese Communist bloc. Captured material shows that much of it was fabricated by the Skoda Munitions Works in Czechoslovakia and transported across Russia and Siberia and then sent through China into Vietnam. Military supplies for the Communist armies have been pouring into Vietnam at a steadily increasing rate. Military and technical guidance is supplied by an estimated 2, 000 Communist Chinese. They function with the forces of Ho Chi Minh in key positions-in staff sections of the higher command, at the division level and in specialized units. As it

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says in that quote, the two largest communist countries ever were funding and teaching the Viet Cong. Had we not intervened and the communists succeeded, an action could have occurred leading to a fully Communist Asia. It would have happened very easily and very quickly just like dominoes falling over. When we finally left, thousands and millions of people died as a result of not helping the Viet Cong. Those in power within the United States were afraid that the Communist theories could provide some resistance to their attempts at branching out the Democracy that is so often forced on the countries that policed by them.

This Domino Theory is essentially the entire reason that the United States participated in the Vietnam War. So, by extension, this Domino Theory is the reason that *The Things They Carried* was written and thus provides a background into the generally unwanted involvement in this war. O'Brien showed much of this discomfort in the chapter "On the Rainy River". During the entire length of this chapter he fought with himself over the concept of going to war. This was generally something experienced by every person that went to Vietnam as many did not see the reason for going. Domino Theory provides a background for the U. S. involvement in the Vietnam War and shows why the participants may have been against it.

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